

and Claims 24-26 have been newly submitted. This Preliminary Amendment does not add new subject matter.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Versions with Markings to Show Changes Made."

Respectfully submitted,

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BY


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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Specification:

Please substitute the paragraph beginning on page 3 at line 9 with the following:

Any food-grade, *lactobacilli* strain which may be used. For example, the following *lactobacilli* may be used: *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, *Lactobacillus crispatus*, *Lactobacillus amylovorus*, *Lactobacillus gallinarum*, *Lactobacillus gasseri* and *Lactobacillus johnsonii*; *Lactobacillus paracasei*; *Lactobacillus reuterii*; *Lactobacillus brevis*; *Lactobacillus fermentum*; *Lactobacillus plantarum*, *Lactobacillus casei* especially *L. casei* subsp. *casei* and *L. casei* subsp. *rhamnosus*; *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* especially *L. delbrueckii* subsp. *lactis*, *L. delbrueckii* subsp. *helveticus* and *L. delbrueckii* subsp. *bulgaricus*; and ~~*L. leydii* nesebteriades~~ especially *L. mesenteroides* subsp. *cremoris*, for example (Bergey's Manual of Systematic Bacteriology, vol. 2, 1986; Fujisawa et al., Int. Syst. Bact. 42. 487-491, 1992).

In the Claims:

Please amend Claims 11, 12, 14, 19 and 21-23.

11. (Amended) A method for the treatment or prophylaxis of treating mineral deficiencies in a mammal comprising the steps of enterally administering to the mammal a nutritional composition comprising *lactobacilli* one or more *Lactobacillus* bacteria.

12. (Amended) The method of Claim 11 wherein the *lactobacilli* is a *Lactobacillus* bacteria is capable of adhering to intestinal cells.

14. (Amended) The method of Claim 11 wherein the nutritional composition comprises about 10^7 to about 10^{11} cfu/ml of the *lactobacilli* *Lactobacillus* bacteria.

19. (Amended) A method for increasing absorption of minerals from a diet comprising the steps of enterally administering to a mammal a nutritional composition comprising *lactobacilli* one or more *Lactobacillus* bacteria.

21. (Amended) The method of Claim 19 wherein the *lactobacilli* ~~comprises a~~ *Lactobacillus* bacteria is capable of adhering to intestinal cells.

22. (Amended) The method of Claim 21 wherein the *Lactobacillus* bacteria comprises a *Lactobacillus johnsonii* CNCM I-1225 strain.

23. (Amended) A method for improving the absorption of minerals in a mammal comprising the steps of enterally administering to the mammal a nutritional composition comprising *lactobacilli* one or more *Lactobacillus* bacteria.

Please add Claims 24-26 as follows:

24. (newly added) The method of Claim 23 wherein the *Lactobacillus* bacteria is capable of adhering to intestinal cells.

25. (newly added) The method of Claim 24 wherein the *Lactobacillus* bacteria comprises a *Lactobacillus johnsonii* CNCM I-1225 strain.

26. (newly added) The method of Claim 23 wherein the nutritional composition comprises about 10^7 to about 10^{11} cfu/ml of the *Lactobacillus* bacteria.